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ABSTRACT

Educators' views seemingly converge on the point that education should further the intellectual and physical growth of the student. The means by which this should be accomplished, however, is the point of contention. This paper surveys some of the more recent empirical studies treating growth and maturity in college students, and cites certain key factors that affect change in various dimensions of growth. Major emphasis is placed on curriculum, teaching, and evaluation, and proposed model for a one-quarter internship program specifically directed toward enhancing student growth is included. (Author/HS)

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HUNT, Barrington
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A PROPOSAL: EDUCATING AT COLLEGE LEVEL FOR STUDENT GROWTH

PART I

BACKGROUND

Educators' views seemingly converge at one point: that education should further the intellectual and physical growth of the student. With maturation self-realization and actualization should accrue.

Socrates surmised that education should be directed toward helping one to "Know thyself." Alfred North Whitehead said, "The valuable intellectual development is self-development."[1] Van Doren encouraged man to seek to learn "the skills of being."[2] "All education is the effort to make maturity the more it might become," according to Raushenbush.[3]

Traditional educators were convinced that a liberal education was most effective in the unfoldment of self-realization. The general public broadly supports formal education as evidenced by enormous investments in school facilities and programs. But closer examination might pose the question: does the educational system adequately fulfill student and public expectations? Newspapers and periodicals offer testimony that it does not. We read of charges of "irrelevance" and "empty academicism" being hurled by students and educators alike. Chronicled are student demonstrations of disinterest and contempt: "turning off" and "dropping out." The public reaction is one of disgust resulting in lowered financial and moral support.

Educators and researchers are now taking a harder look at the role of education (especially higher education) in realizing student growth.

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This is not made easier when they must grapple with abstruse terms, e.g., "growth," "self-realization," "the whole man," "maturity," "human excellence," etc. As goals these are at best spiritous. But before despair educators should not discount the progress of the past two decades. Noteworthy research abounds which precisely objectifies and operationalizes these abstractions. Credit must be given Brown, Erikson, Sanford, Warren and Heist, and White.[4]

This paper intends to survey some of the more recent empirical studies treating growth and development of maturity in college students. It will cite certain key factors which affect change in various dimensions of growth. Major emphasis will be placed upon curriculum, teaching, and evaluation. Included is a proposed model for a one-quarter internship program specifically directed toward enhancing student growth.

Four Studies of Dimensions of Student Growth

Four of the most recent studies structure their models of college student growth and developmental tasks upon Erik Erikson's personality theory.

A. Feldman and Newcomb in their forty-year study of The Impact of College on Students found that freshman-to-senior changes in characteristics display a developmental pattern identifiably by considerable uniformity in most American colleges and universities. This became more apparent in the last two decades. Declining "authoritarianism," "dogmatism," and prejudice are noted with a profound decrease in conservative attitudes toward public issues. A growing sensitivity toward aesthetic experiences becomes significant. Other prominent forms of change include increasing openness

to multiple aspects of the contemporary world, increasing intellectual interests and capacities, and declining commitment to orthodoxy (especially in religion). Certain kinds of personal changes — particularly greater independence, self-confidence, and readiness to express impulses are on the trend line.

B. Axelrod and Freedman in Search For Relevance point out growth along the lines of:

1. Independence
2. Creativity
3. Responsibility.

C. Heath's model of the maturing person in Growing Up in College stresses:

1. Representing experience symbolically
2. Becoming allocentric
3. Becoming integrated
4. Becoming more stable
5. Becoming more autonomous.

D. Chickering, in Education And Identity identifies seven commonalities among the major theories of "growth trends," "developmental tasks," "stages of development," "needs and problem areas," as well as "student typologies." Accordingly, he constructs his model to emphasize:

1. Achieving competence
2. Managing emotions
3. Becoming autonomous
4. Establishing identity
5. Freeing interpersonal relationships
6. Clarifying purposes
7. Developing integrity.

To me Chickering's model seems the most comprehensive and relevant. This becomes manifest by a more detailed inspection. Let us see.

Chickering's Dimensions of Individual Growth

(These areas of growth are not to be taken as mutually exclusive but

rather as interrelated and interdependent. One's advancement in one dimension may cause or be the result of an advancement in another dimension.)

1. Achieving Competence. The concept of competence and its role in motivation toward personality development was explored in detail by R.W. White in 1958.[5] Chickering's improvement was that competence should be viewed as a "three-tined pitchfork." The "tines" are: a) intellectual competence, b) physical and manual skills, and c) social and interpersonal competence. However, the most important part of the "pitchfork" is the "handle," a sense of competence, confidence in one's ability to cope and achieve.

2. Managing Emotions. N. Sanford compiled data giving insight into the average freshman as "authoritarian," possessing a "punitive conscience," and exhibiting "stereotyped thinking."[6] Such repressive forces can be overcome, Chickering says, if the freshman can be made to "come aware" of his feelings and to trust them more; He must realize that they provide information and reliable guides for behavior. His two main emotions to manage and control are agression and sex. Sublimation rather than catharsis is indicated.

3. Establishing Identity. White says,"Identity refers to the self of the person one feels oneself to be."[7] Development of identity includes clarification of one's "physical needs, characteristics, personal appearance, ...sex-appropriate roles and behavior."[8] One searching for his identity is searching for a congruence of self with his "human rhythms."

4. Becoming Autonomous. "To be emotionally independent is to be free of continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval."[9]

With increasing autonomy the student transfers his reliance from parents to peers and nonparental adults. There is more willingness to risk loss of friends, approval, or even status to pursue strong interests and support basic beliefs.

5. Freeing Interpersonal Relationships. Education can be directed toward making relationships "less anxious, less defensive, less burdened by inappropriate past reactions, more friendly, more spontaneous, more warm, and more respectful,"[10] according to White. The true person could show through to be treated more in his own right rather than as a stereotyped "cardboard figure" based upon some external appearance.

6. Clarifying Purposes. The student should approach answers to his questions, "Who am I going to be?," and "Where am I going?," through clarification in three areas: a) "avocational and recreational interests," b) "vocational plans and aspirations," and c) "general life-style considerations including concern for marriage and family."[11]

7. Developing Integrity. A movement toward clarification of a consistent set of beliefs as a guide to behavior (an approach toward congruence between behavior and values) involves three sequential, but overlapping states: a) "the humanization of values," b) the personalizing of values," and c) "the development of congruence."[12]

Methodologies of the Studies

The four recent studies by Feldman, Axelrod, Heath, and Chickering reflect elaborate methodological designs and a variety of testing proce-

dures to gather data for and support their respective theories and growth-dimension formulations. The scientifically-selected student subjects were tested during their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. Individual and group changes were determined by comparing the individual's profile with himself and with others at various points in his college career.

In varying degrees the following tests were utilized:

1. Standard psychological tests. Value patterns were determined by the Study of Values (AVL). Interests were clarified by the Strong Vocational Interest Bank (SVIB). Personality traits were measured by the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Personality dynamics were probed by means of the Rorschach test.

2. New procedures which were tailored to test individual theories. These included variants of a Self-Image Questionnaire (SIQ) and the Perceived Self-Questionnaire (PSQ).

3. Interviews with the individual students. Backup information for the interviews was provided by results of the administered tests as well as aptitude scores, record of grades, and faculty and peer judgments of maturity.

Impacts on Student Development

According to Chickering, the determining factors at a college which can accelerate or retard a student's growth along different dimensions are:

1. Clarity and internal consistency of institutional objectives
2. Institutional size
3. Curriculum, teaching, and evaluation
4. Residence hall arrangements
5. Faculty and administration
6. Friends, groups, and student culture.

I would like to elaborate upon how curriculum, teaching, and evalua-

tion influence growth.

Curriculum, Teaching, and Evaluation

Chickering offers voluminous evidence to support his two hypotheses:

"HYPOTHESIS A: When few electives are offered, when books and print are the sole objects of study, when teaching is by lecture, when evaluation is frequent and competitive, ability to memorize is fostered. Sense of competence, freeing of interpersonal relationships, and development of autonomy, identity, and purpose are not.

HYPOTHESIS B: When choice and flexibility are offered, when direct experiences are called for, when teaching is by discussion, and when evaluation involves frequent communication concerning the substance of behavior and performance, the ability to analyze and synthesize is fostered, as are sense of competence, freeing of interpersonal relationships, and development of autonomy, identity, and purpose."[13]

PART II

A MODEL -- MY PROPOSAL FOR AN "INTERNSHIP QUARTER"

The following is my proposal for an elective one-quarter course which would capitalize the findings of these studies in the areas of the promotion of student growth.

A. Basically the quarter should consist of an internship in a public agency, community action center, volunteer self-help program, political campaign, eleemosynary organization, or other productive organizational endeavor within the scope of interest of the student. Such internship

would provide a broadening effect through practical experience — the necessary link and complement to backgrounding in theoretical and academic in-class instruction.

The proposed course contemplates that the student intern would spend approximately twenty hours per week in paid or non-paid work under supervision and observation. The internship could be by the student's individual arrangement or by selection of one offered by the school's Internship Coordination Center. The educational purposes of the internship prescribe that the experience be broad, allow for independent initiative and fact finding with repetitious routine activities (clerical, filing, etc.) held to a minimum. There would be principally an intent for placement of students with higher level officials and staff members. Such would afford a maximum exposure to the policy and decision making processes within an organization.

B. Individual Project. Each intern would be required to write a practicum of his experience relating his observations to some of the theories and views developed in the literature or in foundational classes in previous quarters. A professor of the student's choice or otherwise would be assigned to provide guidance, review progress of the experience, assist in choosing the topic of his paper and otherwise assist in its development. The intern would confer with his sponsoring professor normally about once a week or as needed. An important side benefit from this program is that it allows for student-professor interaction of mutual benefit.

C. Team Project. Interns could ba grouped into teams (I suggest five members or less) to collaborate upon a project relevant to a particular

aspect or organizational behavior. The group would be internally structured to give exercise in responsibility in decision making. Only a minimum of professorial help should be given in choosing the area to be studied, differentiating it into related sub-topics, and integrating all into a consistent unity.

Optimal benefits should accrue when team members are drawn from varied majors, backgrounds, and emphases. For example, a team whose membership represents psychology, history, sociology, political science, and philosophy majors could add perspective and depth to a study, say, of "Organizational Resistance to Change" or "Decision Making." The paper could be contributory and the effect upon its authors broadening. The resultant student-to-student interaction, cooperation and learning should provide relief and a welcome shift from lecture classes with their intense student competition which oftimes generates alienation and frustration.

The internship should be an advance in assuaging a problem pointed out by Colin Young, Chairman of the UCLA Goals Committee's Undergratuate Education Subcommittee, He underscored the negative effect on students who search out the "pipes" in their respective majors and are processed through their "pipes" isolated from contact with students, professors, or collateral learning from other "pipes."

D. Professors. Each team project and individual project would be overseen by a professor who would coordinate rather than direct, raise questions, make suggestions, and provide guidance to keep the project within bounds and educationally fruitful. Professors greatest use could be toward selection of contributory resources -- literature, persons, programs,

and so forth. The professor himself would become a resource person for assistance in the analyses and syntheses through which student understanding and assimilation moves ahead. Accordingly, students would assume more the role of active producers rather than passive consumers in this learning situation.

E. Evaluation. I would suggest grades be given on a Satisfactory-Passing-Failure basis. This array of grades relates to a true life situation of rewards and consequences. The internship itself should carry a sample of life. Evaluation would overall reflect:

1. Professor's evaluations of student's individual and group projects.
2. Professor's impressions from discussion with student and agency officials of the intern's performance.
3. Weight of student-to-student evaluation of the individual's contribution as a team member and to the team project.
4. Student's self-evaluation.

F. Credit and Timing. I would suggest that each quarter of internship be granted 12 units of elective university credit with an allowable of two internship quarters in a four-year curriculum. Internship should preferably be spent in the winter quarter of the sophomore and the senior year. Summer offerings should also be made available.

G. Advantages. The Internship Quarter offers benefits beyond the obvious educational advantages of formal class work; it affords enhancements of the intellectual and emotional aspects of learning. The experience of working in a real-world organization related to the student's major should

be of help to him in deciding upon the wisdom of his choice of major. Is this the real field he has chosen for his life's work? Additionally, the intern should develop contacts and become aware of information sources and techniques of value to him in his future career. A practical benefit often overlooked: the internship should serve to "open doors."

ADDENDA

IMPLICATIONS OF THE "INTERNSHIP QUARTER" FOR STUDENT GROWTH

The curriculum of the Internship Quarter would do more to promote development of autonomy, competence and identity than the typical on-campus quarter because of: a) the increased range of experiences, choices and tasks allowed by the curriculum; and b) the increased responsibility of the intern for choosing his program of study and resources, concentration from a larger field.

I am convinced the teaching practices of the Internship Quarter would foster freeing of interpersonal relationships, development of identity, competence and autonomy. a) The orientation and course content does not make the professor the principal actor in this educational enfoldment. b) Course content touches and sheds light upon basic, existential questions of value and belief as related to complex current issues. c) The course stimulates exchange and discussion between students and professor. d) Recounts of relevant personal experiences, feelings, and reactions are regarded as legitimate supplements to objective analyses.

Evaluation methods of the Internship Quarter aid freeing and expansion of interpersonal relationships. Development of identity and autonomy

follow because: a) pressure of "grade as a goal" is reduced; b) progress and rewards depend less upon inter-student competitive disparity and more upon successful achievement or specified tasks; and c) evaluative feedback becomes more than symbolism and is substantively descriptive of individual strengths and weaknesses.

EPILOGUE

I would not presume to improve upon a brilliant point made by Chickering himself:

"Finally, the role and function of higher education must be addressed. ...The narrow focus on information, the emphasis on training students in subject matter to become subjects of a discipline, profession, or business, must give over to an emphasis on educating men — more complex, autonomous, purposeful persons who can act with integrity, subject primarily to their own clear convictions and belief. Higher education will soon be the most salient feature in the lives of virtually all young adults, as elementary and high school education presently are. Colleges and universities will dominate their waking hours and determine the behaviors they pursue, the thoughts they consider, the attitudes they question or accept, the future directions they take, the life-styles they develop. There is no question about this. The only question is whether rational response will be made to enable more effective development along all seven vectors of growth, or whether these dimensions will continue largely ignored, incidentally fostered or hampered as by-products of other decisions."[14] (Emphasis added.)

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